The Psychology of Unconventional Language

BY

FRANK K. SECHRIST

Clark University

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK UNIVERSITY, WORCESTER, MASS., IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, AND ACCEPTED ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF G. STANLEY HALL

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF UNCONVENTIONAL LANGUAGE*

By Frank K. Sechrist, Clark University

Introduction

The two important aspects of linguistic study are the historical (12a) and the psychological. The former owes its rise to philology, whose original interest was the interpretation of Classical literature. Out of this interest grew historical linguistics, which concerned itself with the genetic relationship of languages and revived the ancient philosophical problem of the origin of language. But however far into the remote past the investigation of linguistic remains was carried, it could not penetrate the past beyond a hypothetical ancestor of historical languages, and it was found impossible to determine how primitive man spoke, in absence of the chief witness. As the oldest language—remains that could ever be discovered could not be regarded as primitive and original, this end of the line of inquiry had to be abandoned and attention was turned to the immediate present as offering a surer basis for scientific research. The study of the language of races now living in primitive conditions seemed

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to offer a closer approach to the subject, but this is also to be regarded as unsatisfactory, for the original language of the lowest savages is also lost in antiquity. The child and its animal congener remain as the only means of approach to the problem of the origin and growth of speech. But now the problem is no longer one of historical linguistics. It must now be framed in terms of physiology and psychology. While the physiology and the psychology of language throw light on linguistic problems, there are no better means than those that the study of language affords to investigate certain comprehensive problems of psychology.

It is only since about the middle of the last century that a psychological method of linguistic study has been recognized. Steinthal's "Grammatik, Logik und Psychologie" (39) was the epoch-making work that gave psychology the place in linguistics that philosophy had formerly occupied. Among later writers it is recognized by Frederich Müller, in his "Grundrisz der Sprachwissenschaft" (21), published in 1876. Paul, in his "Prinzipien der Sprachgeschichte" (25), published ten years later, regards psychology as "die Vornehmste basis aller in einem höhere Sinne gefassten Culturwissenschaften." Although this work was named 'The Principles of Historical Linguistics,' Wundt affirms (39, p 6) "Nicht als Sprachgeschichte, was es nach der ganzen Anordnung und Behandlung des Stoffes weder sein kann noch sein will, sondern als Sprachpsychologie hat unzweifelhaft das Paul'sche Werk seinen Erfolg errungen und seinen Einfluss ausgeübt." To come down to more recent times, a notable contribution to the subject is that of van Ginneken (32), published in 1907. The best known of all the works on the subject, however, approaches it from the direction of social psychology—Wundt's "Die Sprache" (37) in two volumes, first edition published in 1900 and third in 1911.

When once language was recognized as a product of development that had pursued its way for unknown ages, that was above all arbitrary dictums and went on unchecked by fiat or decree, students became expositors rather than law-givers of style. There arose a new reverence for the facts and conditions of growth. Interest in these made the "best usage" a matter of only practical importance. And now how people do speak seems more interesting to students than how they ought to speak.

But of the studies in the psychology of language above referred to, all have been concerned only with the fixed and standard forms of language or with dialects that are related to some great literary language, except that Wundt makes

a passing reference to the "Gaunersprache" in the first edition (37), while he devotes about a page of the third edition to "Slang" (37 Vol. 1, p. 617). They mostly represent attempts to explain the laws of language familiar to the student of linguistics and philology in terms of psychology.

For many years there has been a wide popular interest in the subject of slang and unconventional language generally, as indicated by the number of dictionaries of unconventional words and phrases that have been published. Besides, there have appeared numerous essays on the subject. Among the more important collections of unconventional terms are those cited in the reference list appended to this study. Much of the popular interest in the subject has in the past been due to the question of the relation of slang to the purity of the English language. Again and again a determined stand has been made against the supposed corrupting influences of slang. On the other hand, it would be easy to collect an anthology in praise of slang. The philological tradition from Bopp and Pott to Whitney and March has been tolerant of change through the unconventional, and the list of those who, either by precept or example or both, have been favorably disposed to the use of popular speech, contains such names as DeQuincey, Noah Webster, John Hay, Burns, Lowell, Howells, Bret Harte, Balzac, and many others whose names will readily occur to the reader. It is Lowell's view (40) that "only from its roots in the living generations of men can a language be re-enforced with fresh vigor for its needs; what may be called a literate dialect grows ever more and more pedantic and foreign, till it becomes at last as unfitting a vehicle for living thought as monkish Latin." "True vigor and hardiness of phrase do not pass from page to page, but from man to man."

In the psychology of language in general very little has been done in English; in the psychology of slang nothing at all has come to the attention of the writer. The work that has been done in Germany in compiling dialect and slang dictionaries is inspired mostly by an interest in ulterior purely linguistic problems. In France where the activity in this field is greater than in any other country, there were, at first, besides numerous dictionaries, studies with purely linguistic aims. The prefaces to the French dictionaries of argot bring us closer to the heart of our problem. In his "Dictionaire de la Langue Verte," Hector France tells us that argot is found wherever two classes exist in society. It has outgrown associations limited to thieves, for each profession has its argot which it employs not only to be unintelligible to the layman but to render its phrase picturesque, to give it a variegated

appearance of strangeness. But argot has long since invaded all the realms of society, and now *il prend partout droit de cite.* Delavan in his "Dictionaire de langue verte" (1883) says: "In France one speaks perhaps French, but in Paris one speaks argot, and an argot which varies from one quarter of the city to another, from one street to another, from one class of people to another. It is in the city that new words are fabricated. Paris sets the style for words as it does for hats."

Besides these popular essays and philological studies of slang, there are two works in French which have approached more closely than any others to the psychological interest of the present study. An article by Raoul de la Grasserie in (14) Revue Philosophique, "La Psychologie de l'Argot," was followed by a volume, of one hundred and eighty-five pages, in the Bibliotheque de Linguistique, on the "Etude Scientifique sur L'Argot et Le Parler Populaire," by the same author (13). In the first article, the writer calls attention to the importance of the psychological study of argot and attempts, as he says, to sketch such a study in its chief outlines. The work which followed carries out the suggestions of the preliminary study, so that the two studies may be regarded as one and the same. The larger work did not become accessible to the writer of the present study until after the material for the study had been collected and the plan of treatment decided upon. The only other work on the subject known to the writer is "Le Génie de L'Argot" by Alfredo Niceforo (25). This work came to hand when the present study was all but completed.

An examination of these studies reveals that argot presents the same difficulties of definition and classification as does slang. It is in the attempt to solve this problem that these studies differ fundamentally from each other and that both differ from the present study in slang. De la Grasserie finds no word in French that serves to denote with sufficient exactness the kind of language which he aims to analyze, as *argot* is unsatisfactory for scientific purposes. He has recourse to the use of the Greek base, *glossê,* on which he builds a nomenclature for many different "modes of speech." The Introduction serves to justify this method of procedure. In the first place, a language is distinguished from a mode of speech. It possesses a vocabulary and a grammar, belongs to one nation or race, and serves as the instrument of expression for all classes of the same nation. The several languages divide up territory into "vertical divisions." Within each language there are modes of speech. These forms, or modes, of speech have a common vocabulary, the same literature, and the same grammar in the same language. Their nationality

is the same, they are grouped in the same place, but they become distinct modes of expression for every class of society and every profession. Thus many modes of speech are spoken in a single language. As a territory divides itself between the dialects in vertical divisions, the different modes of speech are superposed in "horizontal divisions." There is a higher mode, a lower mode, a poetic mode of language, etc., etc. In all languages there exists at once a mode of speech more material and more concrete and another more intellectual and abstract. M. de la Grasserie (13, p. 17) divides the "gloses" or modes of speech into two general classes with numerous subdivisions. If a special monograph were devoted to each of these "gloses," the whole undertaking would assume cyclopaedic proportions. This wealth of nomenclature the author finds necessary to escape the ambiguous implications of the word argot.

The English *slang* presents the same difficulties. The term is generally applied to unauthorized language whether it be in popular vogue or shunned as vulgar, or the jargon of some particular class, or the cant of criminals. The classification of slang in the present study does not aim to be so close as that of M. de la Grasserie. The most fundamental of them all and the one which corresponds to that of the work before us avoids the ambiguities of slang by fixing the limits of variability of language between the abstract standard of a class (somewhat equivalent to M. de la Grasserie's *anaglose*) and an individual caprice which may at any time for a reason or for no apparent reason make a departure from the language of the class. For this departure lawless forms may be created, or selected from any unauthorized source. It may be from the slang of a trade, profession, occupation, social class; from a provincial dialect, or the cant of thieves. This individual tendency to break through the lines of conventional language is the subject of the present study. It is the language of individual freedom, the same tendency that accounts for change in government and social life, as well as in language. The word unconventional, then, is a blanket term intended to cover all the kinds of departures from the standard of a class that it is possible to make.

In "Le Génie de L'Argot," M. Niceforo attempts to show that the two fundamental laws of argot (to which the author gave formulation many years before in his book, *Il gergo nei normali, nei degenerati e nei criminali*) are: Every group, every association however small, from the single couple to the largest group, which feels the need of defense in the environment where it lives, creates an argot for the purpose

of concealing its thought; second, the more the necessity of defense and the severity of the struggle are accentuated the more does argot complete and extend itself (23, p. 7). The author's whole idea of argot corresponds with M. de la Grasserie's *cryptoglose* and with thieves' cant, or cryptic slang, of the present study. He carries the principle of intentional secrecy and class conflict farther than the facts seem to warrant. The creation of an argot by deliberate intention is an artificial forcing of language in strong contrast with the spontaneous rise and growth of the unconventional as set forth in this study. M. de la Grasserie combats the assumption of a malicious and defiant motive of language creation in the lower classes of society as if in reply to the author's principle of group conflict as repeatedly emphasized in *Il gergo nei normali, nei degenerati e nei criminali* and " Le Génie de l'Argot " when he says, " Le peuple n'a pas eu le malin plaisir, en présence d'un language trop élevé et un peu ridicule pour lui, d'y contredire en rabaissant tous les mots de l'abstrait au concret, de l'immatériel au matériel; ce serait un acte de volonté expresse, or, de tels actes sont inconnus du language " (13, p. 6). But it is possible that every country reveals a slang of a peculiar character owing to different social conditions which give it rise.

The material used in this study of the unconventional in language consists largely of a collection of words and phrases, more or less familiar in England and America to-day. Besides collecting from the English and American dialect and slang dictionaries about five thousand select words and phrases now in use, the writer has examined many of the more recent popular works in this form, and the columns of metropolitan dailies. He has had the assistance of observers who reported on valuable material and gave introspections on problems set by him. In making the selections of slang uses, the aim was to secure, in the first place, the greatest variety possible in meaning and form. No arbitrary classification was assumed, the material being allowed to exhibit itself in its greatest diversity. After the collection was made, it was found that this principle had been pursued so faithfully that it was almost impossible to make anything like a consistent classification. It was found, as will be seen later, that slang represents characteristics that answer to the most contrary terms of qualitative description. In the second place, it was noted that slang had a more copious vocabulary in some subjects than in others. On some of these subjects exhaustive lists of words were collected. The results were instructive in that they showed what the unconventional tendency of mind avoids as well as prefers.

Sources of Unconventional Language

In view of the fact that standards and tastes have a history and a development, it is safe to assume that there has always been an unconventional language, at least an inevitable tendency towards individual variation. Although what is called slang originated in comparatively recent times, the impulse toward the unconventional has from the earliest times found satisfaction in some way. It is a universal impulse which tends to manifest itself when a vernacular becomes crystallized in a literature and more especially when a literature becomes classic. The vernacular continues to exist in other forms following its own course of development to satisfy the unconventional impulse. After Homer wrote the Iliad his language became "correct," and Protagoras drew his examples from it when he wrote the first book on correct usage in Greek. With the poet Ennius began a marked distinction between Roman literature and popular speech, which was destined to remain in Italy until Dante wrote in the vernacular. In England and on the continent, where first Latin and then French was the language of diplomacy, learning, and commerce, the popular language was regarded as fit only for the ordinary uses of the world; it was, therefore, for the time the form of unconventional expression. Works regarded as having the highest scientific value were produced in Latin. And this language, or the French, was for a long time after the Norman Conquest used, as the most costly raiment, only on the most formal occasions. As long as this was true, English, the language of the masses, served to express the more informal, unconventional, and vital states of mind, the more honest emotions, the deeper feelings of love and hate, of joy and sorrow. As the distinction between the formal and the unconventional continues the vocabulary of the former becomes more abstract and pale while that of the latter becomes more copious and vigorous. This condition of language is the great opportunity of genius. It was the opportunity of Shakespeare, of Tyndale, of Bunyan; of Aristophanes in Greek, Plautus in Latin, Cervantes in Spanish, Rabelais and Moliere in French, Luther in German. All used the unconventional vernacular. Thus, for freshness and vigor of effect, writers appeal to the people in their most familiar language; but by so doing their language in time becomes classic and crystallized and is no longer the fit expression of the fluent freedom of the unconventional. Then the occasion is ripe for a new growth of unconventional forms, different in character from those which preceded it.

But the unconventional in language is characteristic of all

nations and tribes of people. It may be due to social and religious relations of the tribes or to their economic life and tribal customs (22). Savage tribes often possess vocabularies specially pertaining to the arts of peace and war. In some parts of the world the women have their own language. Rochefort in "Histoire Naturelle et Morale des Iles Antilles de l'Amerique," quoted by Lasch (15), reports a language of men which the women understand but never pronounce, and a language used by women which the men do not use except to make sport of it. The result is that to a large extent the language of the men differs from that of the women. Women's dialects are to be found in all of primitive America from Alaska to Patagonia, and they are common in South Africa as proved by numerous studies made by ethnologists referred to in the work of Lasch. Magic and religion seem to require a dialect different from the ordinary language. The priestly class develop it and by keeping it aloof from the rest of the tribe cultivate popular respect and perpetuate their authority. It is due to the superstitions of magic and religion that there are special languages for fishermen and sailors, even among civilized races, for men engaged in various industries whose success is believed to be due to the favor of the deities in some way especially connected with their activities. The camphor industry, the gold and zinc industry, war, and the harvest, require among many tribes a special dialect. Besides these, there are secret dialects understood only by those who have passed through the pubic initiations (10). The savage also has his court language, his market language, even his thieves' cant. Most interesting of all is the secret language of the Maoris of New Zealand, the Hapaos of the Island of Marquesas and others, which probably originated from the play impulse of children and is used by their elders (6) also with ludicrous (31) motives (33). Schlegel (26) reports the Sala language, a humorous secret dialect invented by the Chinese children of Amoy in South China. It consists in changing the conventional speech by doubling or tripling the syllables and changing the initial letter to *s* or *l*. According to a report from "Am Urquell" in Science (27), there are, altogether, not less than one hundred and fifty secret languages. Many of them are children's languages; such as "Potter's Latin," "Dog Latin," "Robber's Language," "Goose Language," all attributed to the school children of various parts of Germany. Besides, there are the "Crane Language" of Denmark, the "Bob Language" of Austria, the "Katzenellenbogen Language" of Germany. It is safe to assert that there is hardly a locality in any part of the world without some unconventional lingo.

All these dialectic variations fall readily into two classes. In some, distinctions of form are arbitrarily made and perpetuated. Others are spontaneous creations, revealing a tendency to follow the lower, more intimate levels of consciousness. Lipps (16) distinguishes three zones of the egoistic consciousness. The first involves the activities of willing and thinking; the second, the awareness of the physical body; and the third, the world of persons and things outside of the physical self. The second of these zones is the mediating ego to the not-self, whose functioning in this capacity, although always a fact, is soon lost to the consciousness and the ego comes apparently into immediate relation to the world beyond it. Now, the consciousness of another self is gained by the same mediating ego, and through the sensible qualities of the mediating ego of the other self. But this extension of the first ego into the regions beyond it is due to the development of the individual self. And the extensions of the ego with its interests and sympathies to larger and larger groups of other selves is the result of the process of education. The savage is capable of only a limited extension of his mental and social horizon. According to Sutherland (30) only races which are capable of union have succeeded in perpetuating themselves. "The lower savages," he says, "combine in hordes numbering from twelve to eighty, the average being about forty." The 'middle savages' are capable of combining to the number of one hundred and fifty, the 'higher savages' to the number of three hundred and sixty, and the remaining classes range from the 'lower barbarians' capable of living together in towns of a thousand to the 'lower cultured' with towns of six million inhabitants. To become capable of social intercourse with a large group, the individual needs besides sympathy a certain power of abstraction and generalization to adjust language forms to the comprehension of any or all the others of the group. To become a citizen of the world requires a culture and training of which not all are capable. In all but the rarest cases does it require effort to acquire and maintain such a power of communication. The majority of any group are capable of entering into full communication with only a limited number of the group. Even the attempt to transmit thought to one hearer often fails from the psychological nature of the process. For the speaker's language rises out of specific imagery which the same language fails to yield in the hearer's mind. The symbols of language may be transmitted, but not their specific content.

Besides lacking the power of abstraction and generalization to adjust forms of language to the comprehension of the

whole group, the normal individual has a strong instinct for privacy, shrinks from the gaze of the crowd, and avoids a free revelation of his individuality. And this fear of self-revelation varies with the size of the group. In the largest groups the individual's inhibitions are strong and numerous; in the smaller groups, other things being equal, they are few and weak. It is only as a member of his family that his individuality allows itself full play. Even in this group created by the most fundamental instincts, there are subdivisions. The parents have certain interests the children cannot share, the older children such as the younger children cannot share. Even the individual personality divides into parts, one of which suppresses the manifestations of another. And all the forms which language takes run in some way parallel to these inhibitions and facilitations due to amalgamations and disintegrations based on common interests.

Variations in language are due chiefly to two classes of conditions, those of a geographical and those of a social character. The first of these conditions gives rise to dialects, which are also a fruitful source of slang forms. The rapidity of language change seems to vary with the density of population. In the sparsely settled country the tendency is to preserve the archaic, in the city to adopt slang. Both conditions are sources of an unconventional vocabulary. In fact, all the diverse dialects of a country, all the provincialisms and localisms, are liable to be drawn on to furnish the vocabulary of the unconventional.

Besides, the slang of occupations and professions is also a source of the unconventional. The tailor, the shoemaker, the sailor, the mill employee, the physician, the minister, the lawyer, each speaks a language peculiar to his class to a certain extent. When for some reason one or another of the trades or professions attracts general attention, words peculiar to it are given a certain currency, thus providing another source of the unconventional. The vocabulary of the slang of a profession or a trade may, therefore, through the force of peculiar circumstances or through the power of an individual, come into unconventional and finally conventional use.

The same may be said of what we call domestic slang. It is frequently found that a family has a language of its own. Only a few changes of languages in a family, if perpetuated and subjected to the natural laws of change would in the course of time result in marked localisms and provincialisms. Family slang undoubtedly does in one way or another modify and create novel forms of speech which tend to become "homely" terms of unconventional language. It may even be true that the most insignificant member of the family, the

baby, may have the greatest influence in the matter of introducing novel forms. For the baby speaks a novel language early in its life, and its influence on the language of adults as they converse with it in its own tongue is believed to be considerable. This is itself an instance of the unconventional, but it also affects the words and locutions that are drawn upon in the ever recurring tendency toward the unconventional. Infantine grammar may tend to regularity as in the case of *bad, badder, baddest;* but it also tends by analogy to produce irregularities. And slang follows both these caprices, saying *comed* for *came, goed* for *went,* as well as *snew* for *snowed, hove* for *heaved, praught* for *preached, squoze* for *squeezed.*

The several stages in the development of child language, according to Ament (2) and Gutzmann (8), are the cry, the lalling stage, and the word-forming stage. The question of whether a child invents a language of its own before it imitates its social and material surroundings need not detain us here. It will be enough to review the results of investigations made with respect to the influence of the child's language, whatever it may be, on the language of adults. It is a well known fact that a child language, developed from the parent's side, often grows up, a language fundamentally conventional with, however, so large a number of unconventional diminutives and terms of endearment thrown in as to become almost unintelligible to one not a member of the family. Ament (2, p. 33) emphasizes the child's part in the composition of the family unconventional, saying, "All the onomatopoeias and the language of the nursery in general are not the invention of mothers and nurses but of the generations of children of thousands of years, to whom the mothers and nurses have in this matter no other relation than to imitate and transmit what the children offer." Wundt stresses (38) the other side when he says, "The mothers and the nurses who accommodate themselves to the child's stage of vocal development and the child's preference for sound duplications are the real inventors of the child language." Whether we agree with Wundt, Meumann, Idelberger, Stumpf, Stern and others, that the child's language comes from the mother and the nurse, or with Ament, Lindner, Strümpell, Taine, Sully, and others, that the child is original in its early language, the fact remains that from one cause or another there arise here transformations which may at some time be the source of an unconventional vocabulary. That through imperfect imitation of sounds in the surroundings the child often produces novel effects, is not disputed by any one. These forms are taken up and repeated by the elders with

humorous and homefelt emotions. The transformations may be slight, as when produced in the later stages of development; or they may produce in the earlier stages forms that no one can trace to an original. For example, it would not be supposed that *notis* is derived from *orange, turt-muddles* from *mud-turtles;* that by special association *Katze* and *Stuhl* should be called "*guck*" as reported by Wundt, and that the large number of forms repeated by Stern (29), including their derivatives, could have any originals in the conventional language. Numerous illustrations of transformations of words and spontaneous language are given in "Studies of a Child" by Chamberlain (4). Among many hundreds of unconventional designations applied to the baby by members of the family, reported by President Hall (11) from answers to a questionnaire, were names of animals, plants, food, characteristics of mind or body, names of supernatural beings, names of sounds, fictitious names, and alliterative combinations of miscellaneous and unknown sources. A few of the more original are pinkie, giglamps, periwinkle, peep o' day, brick-top, frowzle-top, lunky, yahoo, wobbler, nincompoop, roly-poly, nizzle-nozzle, niperty-tuck, mumblety-peg, and sniggle-fist.

The humorous side of the nickname and its association with the spirit of good-fellowship appears to-day in school and college life. It is regarded a mark of popularity to have a nick-name, if given from motives of cameraderie. These names are preferred in the social intercourse of the ball-field and the study-room. States and cities, as is well known, also have names for unconventional uses. The impulse to put off convention seems as natural and instinctive in language as in any other form of expression. The escape to the unconventional seems like a refreshing change to out-door life from the constrained and stifling atmosphere of convention.

Besides, there is the slang of students, the slang of the sporting world, and, in general, the slang of the street. Each of these has its own peculiar conditions of growth and origin, and also its own peculiar way to crowd its words and idioms into the vocabulary of one who occasionally puts off the conventions of language. The slang of the street grows up where clerk meets clerk, laborer meets laborer, to talk over matters of common interest. Sporting slang has its origin at ball games, the race track and on all occasions where stakes of one kind or another are set and the emotions are stimulated to their highest pitch in artificial ways.

The by-word, or sentence slang, was originally an unconventionalism with a humorous origin. The type illustrates the fate of much slang. These sayings had at first a well-

understood origin. In time they retained only their emotional association, losing their relation to what called them forth. There are many such phrases now used unconventionally with only an emotional force as indicated by the fact that those using them recognize in them no other meaning. They give a "Roland for an Oliver," "rob Peter to pay Paul," "fight like Kilkenny cats," and "grin like a Cheshire cat." And yet they do not know a Roland from an Oliver, and attach no significance to Peter, Paul, Kilkenny, or a Cheshire cat. This last has been changed in some parts of the United States into "Jersey" cat and in other parts to "Chessy" cat. It makes no difference whether this refers to the design of a cat's face used in Cheshire to stamp butter pats, or to any other cat so long as it is a cat that grins. The ideation may be narrow, the emotion requiring only a slight thread to hang to. The "Cheshire cat" motive has become as general and indefinite as the phrase familiar among children, "He grinned *like everything.*" Another illustration of the same thing is "to look nine ways for Sunday" (at a loss to know what to do). This is effective even though we don't know that it is derived from "to look two ways." With all its force it does not appear what Sunday has to do with the phrase, as it would seem any other day would do as well. After reflection, we may find that not to look for Sunday rather than any other "common" day would indicate a lack of intelligence; as of all days in the week not to be able to see Sunday would seem stupid, indeed. But it must be remembered that the thought the phrase yields is put into it after reflection sets in and does not appear in the emotional complex of actual language. The less essential parts of the phrase slough away and finally leave only a word or two to carry the emotion it may be intended to communicate.

The same principle applies apparently to words used in a variety of connections, many of which seem most inappropriate. These overworked words may belong to conventional or unconventional language. The fact is that here too the emotional intonation is of prime importance and the idea to be communicated negligible. Expression in this form is often limited to a few favorite words. It is primarily language for the ear rather than for the eye. It is this kind of language that to some persons has the characteristic marks of slang and that is much condemned by those who emphasize thought-content in language.

In this connection profanity might be mentioned as contributing a large number of words of hackneyed slang. They also serve for the expression of emotion rather than the communication of thought. However, they are not always in-

tended to be heard, and are often used inadvertently and unconsciously. In their form is revealed a strong inclination to conceal their meaning, for the vocabulary of profanity is characterized by various disguises of derivation.

The cartoon is also a source of slang. Slang is often practically the cartoon in words. It is safe to say, too, that the cartoonist often takes his cue from a slang phrase. Again, the story may be a source of slang. Slang phrases illustrative of this are "put me off at Buffalo," and "waking up the wrong passenger." Inversely, it is possible, too, that a slang phrase may suggest a story.

Another source of the unconventional, altogether different from those already mentioned, is what might be called cryptic slang, or the cant of concealment created by thieves by spelling original words backwards (back slang), from the middle outward (center slang), and by the use of rhyming words (rhyming slang). Tramps, also, are said to have a secret language, and so do the gypsies whose vocabulary (3) is derived mostly from Sanscrit and other Indian dialects as well as from the nations they met in their wanderings from the East. This is an artificial kind of slang created in mechanical fashion in strong contrast with that which rises in spontaneous activities.

Language requires groups for its creation, as it is conditioned on social environment. The conditions of group life with common vital interests is necessary for habituation to forms, which language requires. That language forms may take hold of the consciousness, they must accompany emotional reactions. This may occur in two ways: first, through the immediate experience of the individual, and second (what is almost as effective), through *Einfühlung* of the mediating ego of another self. The opportunities for these reactions occur most favorably in the smaller groups in which there is a close relation to the fundamental instincts; such as the family with its homely affections, its honor, its pride; the trade and the profession, in which the individual has his living to make and the honor of the group to maintain; the sport, in which there are both natural and artificial stimulations of interest. It is in these smaller groups that the individual spends most of his time, and here his language becomes habitual and is accompanied by mental and physical activities of the intensest kind. It is in the feeling reaction that language forms take root and persist long after the individual has outgrown the interests which imbedded them in his memory. The groups also provide other favorable means of rooting language in memory, for they occasion a natural repetition of the forms and their numerous associa-

tions. Compared with the language formed under such conditions, the language of the book and the study is to many, probably to most, people an unreal thing.

To those engaged in the same business or trade there is a material means of communication near at hand and possessed in common. The immediate external world, whatever it be, furnishes the most natural means of language. Under such conditions there may be several motives for extending a vocabulary; one is, the rise of the feeling of familiarity with the existing language and the consequent desire for relief in novelty; another is a deepening interest in the material which leads to a growth of ideas and a corresponding increase of vocabulary. To the layman who has only a limited interest in a special line of work, such an increase of vocabulary is not necessary. But when through a profession or a trade, a commotion is brought about in society as a whole, when the public is aroused and becomes acquainted with the affairs of that profession, then the conditions become favorable to a transition of the slang of a class to the slang of society. This has happened in this country when the public attention was drawn, for instance, to contemporary wars, polar expeditions, the conflict of labor, the insurance scandals, municipal corruption, and the graft of big business. The use of class slang becomes general also through the more normal and constant force of good-fellowship which operates at the points of contact between the various groups as they meet individually when pursuing their several vocations.

The same thing is well illustrated in a popular sport. The base-ball enthusiast, who knows the game and gets excited over it, naturally has a different attitude to the language used on the ball grounds from that of the man who does not know the game. To the latter the many synonymic phrases used in the game seem so much mere language and slang. He sees only one way of hitting a ball and probably there is only one that he can achieve. But the enthusiast sees the same thing in many different forms and colors. Various shades of emotion strive for exact expression. It is possible to have all these expressions for hitting a ball with attendant circumstances: he *pummeled* a liner to Devore, *larruped* a home-run to right, *banged* the ball on the nose, *punched* a hit to right, *smashed* a drive, *whacked* a grounder, *slapped* an easy grounder, *planked* a sizzling one, *spiked* a one-base shot to centre, *rammed* a single to left, *lammed* a single past Larry's ear, *slammed* a single to centre, *whaled* a home-run, etc. A hit may be called a jab, a rasping single, a peppery grasser, a pop fly, a homer, a horse-shoe drive, a dinky fly, etc., according as it varies in length, speed, motion, the sound

it makes, or the curve it describes. All these varieties are of interest to one who knows the game and follows it, and he must have fitting names for them. Whenever in history an interest grew up in any sport, as in hunting and hawking, a vocabulary grew up and had its influence on the general language to the same degree that the popularity of the sport became general. It is the same with the synonymy of any of the languages whether of civilized or savage races (12); the synonymy follows the liveliest interests.

Unconventional language is in a continual flux, for all words that pass from one class to another or become generally known are old words in disguise. They seem new and serve the purpose of new ones, but as the philologist Pott declared (quoted by Max Müller in Science of Language), no absolutely new word was ever created in all the history of language. The composition of new words from old ones shows, however, different degrees of originality. Words made by rule, with a deliberate purpose, like learned neologisms and cryptic slang, are to be regarded less original than those that appear spontaneously. In all cases of slang of concealment the method of disguise is known by members of the class. In the case of a coinage of a scientific term the motivation involves the impulse to form a rational association of word and idea. All that any coinage needs is an acceptable *initial* association, a small dowry of reasonable content to get a start with, it may afterwards have ever so checkered and uncertain a career. And this is because to begin a career, it must be acceptable to at least two persons. As the first class of coinages illustrates the operation of successive association in which the idea is joined deliberately and arbitrarily to a chosen word, so the second is an illustration of simultaneous association. A good illustration of the latter (35) is the naming of a craft to which on being launched a bystander called attention by exclaiming "*How she scoons!*" The craft at once became a *schooner* and has kept the name. In such a case some individual is the first source of the word, but it lives with the crowd. In this particular case *sc*, found also in an archaic dialect form *scun*, may in some way have had an influence on the coinage. The *sc* as in *scat, scoot, skate,* and other words with initial sibilations connoting motion, meant here a rapid gliding, and the continuous *oo* and the liquid smoothness of the final consonant was instinctively felt as the fitting designation of the thing.

In spite of the fact that any one may readily coin a word, not one in a hundred thousand succeeds in making a word current. Deliberate attempts have been made by many writ-

ers and scientists but with only indifferent success, as may be inferred from W. L. Mead's account of coinages (19) that have been made. And this is not surprising when it is remembered that we are not yet entirely free from the notion that the name is a part of the object. Among savages the name *is* the object and to pronounce it is the same thing as to touch the object which it designates. To give an evil thing its bad name is to hurt and offend it and invite reprisal; hence the well known euphemisms in all languages. The naïve attitude of the peasant to the relation of word and idea is illustrated in the remark that is reported (34) to have been made in admiration of the feats of astronomy: "I can understand how the astronomers can measure the distance to the fixed stars, but how they ever found out their names gets me." It seems like creating a thing to create a new word. The mountains and rivers of a country keep the names given to them by the conquered races. If the Indian name was Susquehanna or Mississippi, then that must be the name of the river.

The words of ordinary use are not intentionally created. They rise spontaneously, and are recognized as new after they have been spoken. In its essential nature speech is rooted in the emotions. The sounds a child makes before the impulse to communication sets in are all tones in their native emotional colors. They fit like the skin. The child acquires a large repertoire of sounds before it begins to echo the sounds of the environment and imitate with lip movements the oral element of expression. Soon gesture and facial expression are added to the association. In the new complex, gesture assumes an important demonstrative function in that it visibly orients sound, lip movements, and facial expression, which were at first purely imitative, to the objects to which they belong. Since the sound of words and their corresponding objects vary much more than the gestural elements of the associations, the latter through more frequent repetition gradually recede in importance from the consciousness, and soon become automatic, and finally may lose all but their psychic component. The impulses to all these activities in the child arise in feelings of pleasure and pain. They are the first and continue for a long time to be the sole determinants of action. In the course of the development here briefly sketched the child experiments with every variety of sound and form. There are repetitions and duplications, abbreviations and elongations, assonances and onomatopoeias,—there is pleasure in the language process for its own sake. The adult himself often playfully reverts to the plane of childhood, either in mimicry or from some other

motive, and juggles with the sounds of words. Certain elementary sounds come to represent certain emotions because they accompany those emotions more frequently than any others. Hence, when the emotions appear certain elementary sounds appear with them, and they may combine in new ways to form new words. But every candidate for acceptance into a vocabulary needs the support of many persons to give it a permanent vogue. One of the observers in this study who also assisted in gathering material reported one slang usage that went no further than the original utterance of the person using it. It was as follows: A mother rebuked her daughter saying, "You are going all to pieces," the daughter's face flushed as she replied, "I am not *piecy*." Another case reported was a new use of *sail* for a hat. A man and two ladies turned the corner of a city street where the wind was strong. It caught one large hat at an advantageous angle. Some one said, "Hold on to your *sail!*" Neither of these uses lived. Both were borne to the consciousness on streams of emotion. In both cases the words came up unconsciously. Another instance of an original word-form reported by one of the observers is the following: "I entered the kitchen the other evening and seeing a tin of gummy, stodgy, home-made candy, I at once exclaimed, spontaneously, 'Well, I am glad to see a little *goolush* around the house.' The descriptive adjective *stodgy* also came spontaneously, but I fancy it is a word I heard before." The word *stodgy* which the observer does not remember having heard before is used in The Mill on the Floss to apply to a distended pocket. The observer's use is dialectic and colloquial in England and Scotland where it is applied to a thick, stiff substance, including food; heavy, cloying, satisfying, also clogging, sticky. How this use got into the mind of the observer, it is impossible to say. As to *goolush* there is no such word on record. The more original effects in word composition of adult language may be due to a sort of disequilibration of mind through emotional stress or fatigue. In such compositions as *strambling* for *strolling* and *rambling, plodging* from *plodding* and *trudging*, the syllables were jumbled together because the mind used its available energy to hold the idea and nearly lost the sound association.

The number of sounds that can be made by the organs of speech is indefinitely large. But each language actually does contain only a certain limited number of phonetic groups. There could be unlimited variation in English speech to satisfy any caprice however unique and individual it might be. But the range of individual variation is limited by social restraint. The experiment has been tried to coin words

simply as words and without reflection as to meaning with the result that the observer finds it easy to bid syllables to rise in his consciousness and unite. But when instead of a simple unreflective coinage the observer is to communicate an idea on the spur of the moment through a coined word, the process is immediately complicated and he finds himself under the immediate necessity of compounding his idea with a word compounded of the spirit of the individual and of the social self. He instinctively uses elements that are already familiar and fits the word into a familiar context. The rise of an unconventional form of expression requires individual initiative, a social atmosphere unified by a common interest and a common focus of attention, and concurrent emotion of a favorable kind.

There is a time when language rises in spontaneous fullness but there is also a time when children become interested in things rather than words and when their prime law of life is to get the most with the least effort. At this time they read much and say little and express themselves in the easiest way. Gesture language with nodding and shaking the head is used, without words. This is the age of abbreviated syntax, and short-cut slang. This seems the very opposite of voluble slang discussed before. Both these variations from the standard usage are characteristic of youth. Age and conservatism and convention seem to belong together. Gauchat (7), in his study of the phonetic character of the dialect of Charmey, Switzerland called those ninety to sixty years of age, the first generation; those sixty to thirty, the second generation; those thirty to —, the third generation. His results show that in the first generation the phonetic laws are more or less latent, to appear irregular in the second, but "se repandre triomphalement dans la derniere." The returns from a questionnaire sent out by President Hall (5) in regard to the prevalence of slang among school children show that the curve of slang begins low at nine, rises very rapidly from eleven to twelve, reaches its highest point at thirteen but is still high at fifteen, then falls rapidly to eighteen and twenty-one. An investigation (20) of the usage of the high school students of Madison, Wisconsin, revealed a larger vocabulary of slang in the Freshman than the higher classes. The facts are well known and it is no assumption to say that youth in the limits set by Gauchat's third generation is the age of the unconventional in language as in other manifestations of life. In spite of the repressions of conventionality, the spirit of youth overleaps all bounds (9), gives vocal inflection a new range, forms new phonic variants, and cuts out new channels of speech.

The unconventional language of any period reflects the social and material environment of the time. Conservative use is slow to adopt a new imagery, yet theoretically, a language which reflects the immediate environment has the advantage of freshness as well as intelligibility. The imagery of mountains, trees, land and sea, is always with us. A language that reflects things that change tends to become stale. Among the happiest effects of slang are such as have been produced by comparatively recent American writers who have transferred the material of language to the field of improvement in industry and advance in science. This tendency gives us such forms as a live wire, ready-made youth, to give the shut-off signal, to throw in the high-speed thought-gear, to turn on the lurid language, to lose the combination, to ring off, to speed up, to pull wires and lay pipes, to put the brakes on, to shut off steam, to flag one, to switch the current onto one's self, to put the Teddy sign on something (to mark as false). The last presidential campaign gave us "bull moose," and "moosette," and the reputed characteristic of the people of one of the States "who want to be shown" gives us "in this matter, we are all Missouri."

Many of the usages here cited are not yet to be found in the dictionaries of slang. They are still near their original source. Now, much of the slang of the dictionaries is such as has had at some time a limited vogue but is not now as a rule to be traced further back than to a social group among whom it was current. The way of life of some of these groups is itself taboo, and puts the tag of the forbidden on their vocabulary. Here the question of formal incorrectness of phrase or far-fetched association need not enter into consideration, for the unconventional life described by the words marks them at once as vulgar slang.

Much of the slang found in the dictionaries is relatively fixed and hackneyed. It represents that part of unconventional language which has gained favor and has often been repeated in a limited group but for some reason has never become part of the standard language. It has, therefore, acquired a character whose psychology may be investigated. This slang vocabulary shows what are the favorite themes, what are the special interests of slang that gains a temporary foothold in the dictionaries. Recurring to a principle referred to before, a large number of words on the same theme does not indicate useless repetition but a synonymy of ideas; it reveals something like technical specialization, interest and analysis, a perception of the finer shades of distinction which come only to the initiated. Judging by the number of words found in the slang vocabulary, its interest centers largely in

the gambler, the thief, the drunkard, and the libertine. If the generalization be drawn more widely, the vocabulary shows that money and the sensual indulgence which it purchases are the dominant interests of this kind of slang. On the other hand, it ignores all that belongs to the routine duties of ordinary life; it does not characterize the humdrum and commonplace. It has few words for work; indeed, the word work itself means to steal or to deceive. There is little in the vocabulary to suggest naiveté, innocence, and spontaneous playfulness. It is purely unsentimental. It castigates every kind of excess of sentiment or sensual indulgence. Although its interest centers largely in sensual indulgence, its attitude to all who show a weakness either of a moral or a mental kind, to all who are unheroic, is that of a "Dutch uncle," whose every word is reproof. There are more than five hundred words or phrases in slang relating to the possession or deprivation of money. The present writer collected up to four hundred and fifty without by any means exhausting the supply. There are hundreds on games and gambling, which could be classified also under money. On eating and gluttony the writer's collection, which is incomplete, numbers four hundred. On thieving and allied roguery there are not less than eight hundred. Farmer and Henley's dictionary alone contains under the head of "*thief*" between four and five hundred synonyms. The slang vocabulary on money is itself relatively prosy and commonplace. There are many names for money which must have gained currency on account of the peculiar influence of the persons first using them or some peculiar association in the place in which they were first used, for they seem simply names without any apparent reason for their existence. There are others suggesting appearance, as, shiners, tin, browns, buttons, chips, bluebacks, the long green, green-goods, shad scales, canary, glistener, cart-wheel, etc., etc. By a sort of irony slang characterizes what is so hard to secure by names for the most commonplace things, hence, rocks, brads, dough, dust, clinkers, horse-nails, bones, hard-tack, soap, flour, hard-stuff, pap, rivets saw-dust, shells, shot, etc., etc. Other epithets in which the association lies deeper are, the needful, the wherewithal, ballast, grease, honey, palm oil, salt, tonic, etc. A few of the names are so strange in form as to suggest something rare: scads, mopus, rhino, tlac, dooteroomus, tusheroon, mejore, etc., etc. Although the interest of slang in money is shown to be considerable, money itself seems too prosaic for unconventional language in its most characteristic and interesting forms. Here as in other themes its interest lies chiefly in excess. Recklessness, miserliness, acquisitive-

ness, come in for its scorn. To fool, potter, muddle, fritter away money, to be a tight-wad, to be tight-fisted, to be a skinflint.

Slang characterizes without mercy physical defects and peculiarities, and infirmities incident to age. It also castigates all forms and phases of stupidity. It sends one on a sleeveless errand, for pigeon's milk, a straight hook, or the diary of Eve's grandmother, and thus blambustercates, bamboozles, bilks, fakes the kidment. It knows how to flim-flam, to flummox, to gild the pill, to gravel, to gull, to haze, to jimify, to jolly, slumguzzle, to soft soap, to spoof, to string, to stuff, to sawdust, to take in, to work the poppycock racket on any daffy squirt or dotty chucklehead or dippy mushhead, on any crazy kioodle or concatenated chump.

Although slang is always breaking with conventions, it is especially severe with those who have idealistic tendencies. It ridicules belief in what is generally regarded as impossible as a mere figment of the imagination or a delusive hope. There are air-built schemes, air-mongers who attempt to square the circle, to wash a blackamoor white, weave a rope of sand, extract sunbeams from cucumbers, set the river on fire, catch a weasel asleep, teach a pig to play the flute, catch the wind in a net. A person who looks to the future for the fulfillment of his hopes has maggots, bugs, wheels in his head, sees the flying Dutchman, the great sea-serpent, or dreams of the land of Prester John.

Slang tends to exaggerate perfections as well as imperfections, but in the latter it is particularly rich and extensive in its vocabulary. In characterizing quick action it is summary and direct, for the slow and uncertain it makes derogatory comparisons. Vanity, pride, and hypocrisy are the usual targets of its scorn. Qualities, good or bad, are more than superlatively characterized. It produces its effect by its free range over all the field of the familiar and the contemptible and selects such an imagery as shall not alone be readily conceived but also intimately felt. It is particularly acceptable when it hits off an evil and is applicable to the other fellow. It delivers blows and is capable of checking abuses. It prefers the abrupt and the shocking. It is superior to accepted use through its emotional force. It almost invariably makes implications of similarity between persons and the animal world and the disgusting or immobile or inert. It is peculiarly adapted to excoriation of abuses which come through somnolent convention, custom and habit, to social and communal weaknesses, to formalism in religion and politics, to sentimental dreams of unrealities, in fact, to all the forms and features of conventionalism.

However, it does not manifest a consciousness of purpose. It has results simply by being what it is. An investigation of the vocabulary on drink will better than any other reveal something of its peculiar character. Intoxication through drink does not itself alone stir the imagination of the subject, it also appeals to the imagination of those who see only the uncertain and often unexpected result of drink. It is a well worn theme in all literature and the slang vocabulary on strong drink is unusually rich. The state of intoxication is itself favorable to the creation of some of the most characteristic slang expressions. It extends the limits of emotional excitement far above and below the average, ranging in the field of the superlative and often showing a clearness of penetration, a happy abandon, an unprejudiced candor, a sense of individuality and personal immunity, a heartless precision of language that "madness often hits upon." The language of a man in liquor seems the very antithesis of reflection, and it is plausible to suppose that the individual source of many of the slang epithets on this theme emanate from alcoholic erethism. The social effect of a spree is to raise individualities while it reduces the common sense relations. The most effective of the bar-room epithets are repeated and gain a certain currency, eventually finding their way into the printed collections.

As the vocabulary on drink and drinking is probably the fullest and certainly the richest of all the themes for which slang shows a preference, a somewhat more extended investigation of the impulses involved is desirable. It is, of course, to be taken for granted that slang utterance, especially considering the conditions under which it usually appears as indicated above, is a spontaneous manifestation of unconscious processes. The atmosphere of gay good-humor, and lack of deliberation which conditions its rise, need not be further considered. And the vocabulary on drink is large enough to offer something like a complete gamut of expression on a single subject. The writer's collection of more than a thousand words will reveal the possibilities of slang in so far as it can be inferred from the synonyms of a theme. The vocabulary shows a wide range over all the subjects related to drinking. It describes the drunkard's appearance in considerable detail; it has many names for each of the different kinds of drink; many names for the place in which liquor is sold; it comments on the drunkard's actions, interprets every movement he makes and follows his mental and physical states from the time he feels a "spark in his throat," until he is "pickled" and "at rest." It involves condensation, comparison, exaggeration, positive and negative, re-

pression by euphemism and irony, the realistic literal and the brutally coarse.

Many slang words are taken from the language of the shambles and call to mind some of the vital parts of dismembered animals. It is these words numerously compounded which one uses to describe the portly appearance due to excessive indulgence. In these compounds the recurring sounds of *s* and *z* suggest the sizzing, foaming beverage and call attention to all the disgusting physiological processes involved in drinking to excess. Sow-drunk, swine-drunk, involve comparison with pigs wallowing in filth. A swill-pot involves comparison with a receptacle for waste and the body is regarded as inert and immobile down into which things are poured. Suck and sucker are numerously compounded suggesting a weak and helpless doting on drink.

Sometimes it reveals a Gargantuan exaggeration expressing a wish for a throat a mile long and oceans of drink. To imbibe is to take a shove in the mouth and to irrigate, to take liquid fire, bottled earthquake, and chain lightning. Or again, the words are much underdrawn in order to exaggerate quality. Now a drink is simply described as a taste, a smile, a nip, a nipperkin, a thimbleful, a toothful, dew-drop, or only something damp. In the various states of intoxication, the victim now sees large, now small.

Sometimes long, dignified words somewhat conceal meaning in form, showing a tendency to repression rather than to revelation and exhibition. Now the drunkard is a potator, a borachio. He is pongellorum, hiccius doccius, palatic, has a touch of boskiness; to drink is to nippitate, to hit up a libation; to be drunk is to be obfuscated and tosticated.

Again it names drink by its result with downright literalness calling it misery, poison, soul-destroyer, family-disturbance, blue ruin, and hell-broth.

Sometimes the throat and mouth are compared to things lifeless and inert and the process of drinking is represented as purely mechanical. The receptacle for drink is gutter lane, beer street, common sewer, drain, funnel; to drink is to sluice the dominoes, the ivories, the red lane.

It describes all degrees of drinking and drunkenness in mild and severe terms. The drunkard is thirsty, tries a smile, draws the cork or cracks the bottle, takes a nip or wets his whistle, sluices the gob, looks lively, becomes mellow, is in liquor-pond, is ramping mad, tangle-footed, and laps the gutter. In his worst state he has the gallon-distemper, the barrel-fever, the blue-devils, the jim-jams, the jumps, the shakes, the triangles, and the uglies, and finally sees snakes and pink spiders.

However, the large majority of terms used are repressive and euphemistic. A man in liquor has a touch of the brewer, a drop in the eye, has a guest in the attic, is full of Dutch courage. A drink is a morning rouser, a reposer, a sparkler, a rinse, nectar, French cream, caper-juice, a revelation. The drinker is afflicted, all at sea, a bit on, concerned, disguised, in his altitudes, exalted, gilded, glorious, salubrious, chirping merry.

Another important class of words assumes a medicinal value for drink. Here drink is an appetizer, a digester, invigorator, refresher, settler, soother, warmer, toast, medicine. Drink inspires also certain qualities making a person pot-sure and pot valiant, and as indicated by forms of invitation to drink, it suggests the attitude of defiance to all remonstrance, admitting that it is deathly and willing that it shall be: nominate your pizen, let's drive another nail into the coffin, let's hide some more ruin.

In some cases the association is far-fetched and the ideation narrow so that its relevance is no longer apparent; in others, a part is selected to dominate the whole process of drinking with a penetrating insight. The doting toper looks through the glass, reads the makers name, dips rather deep, bites his name in, dips his beak. A drink gives nature a filip, paints the town red; a drunken man is a ship in full sail, with a full cargo on board, carries a blossom nose, is an ensign bearer, with a flag of distress. The place where liquor is sold is a devil's house, a gargle factory, a roosting-ken, an O-be-joyful works, a wobble-shop. There are not less than twelve synonyms for beer, nineteen for porter, twenty-five for gin, and thirty-seven for whiskey. Slang makes a fairly complete inventory of the business as a whole, and shows up its results in damning variety. Its exhibitions and revelations of reality, its ludicrous insinuating euphemisms are effective because they *are* often coarse and indecent in imagery; because they *are* usually brief and direct; because they amuse, startle, shock; because they *are* different for whatever reason from what is customary; in short, *because they are slang.*

On the more serious subjects slang is often without the least trace of feeling or sentiment. It makes light of suicide, hanging and death. The epithets on hanging, although mostly obsolete, reveal a heartlessness that could have no place in conventional language. The victim dies of hempen-fever, has hempen-fortune, and leaves a hempen-widow. In the days when hanging for various reasons was common, the victim was said to go to the deadly never-green. The gallows were the sheriff's picture frame, the scrag-squeezer; where

the victim cuts a caper upon nothing, dances upon nothing in a hempen cravat to a Newgate hornpipe without music, has a hearty choke (artichoke) with caper sauce for breakfast, kicks the wind with his heels. In Western America he is roped for business purposes, telegraph-poled, yanked up, jerked away, and afterwards planted in the sage-brush.

Slang reference to the devil suggests that he is a familiar acquaintance of long standing. In nearly all cases he is referred to as old, and in something like an approximation to sympathy, he is given a relatively familiar Christian or descriptive name. There is no sign of doubt as to his personal reality. He is Old Nick, the Old One, Old Blazes, Old Bendy, Old Driver, Old Harry, Old Scratch, Old Toast, Old Goose-berry, etc. To the church and the clergy the slang attitude is as a rule irreverent. The minister is the gospel sharp, devil-dodger, fire-escape, snub-devil, gospel-grinder, the duck that grinds the gospel mill, and head clerk of the doxology works. It has, however, created *sky-pilot,* an epithet of considerable poetic significance.

In slang's attitude to death it differentiates itself most clearly from conventional language. Here is an individualism of the most undaunted type, a virile aloofness from all the sense of fear which the king of terrors inspires, a feeling of personal immunity from the all-destroyer; perhaps a pretense of indifference, a cheap linguistic bluff concealing and possibly diverting or catharsizing fear, like the small boy's whistling feat on passing a grave-yard at night. To die is to peg out, to go off the hooks, to lose the number of one's mess, to be put to bed with a shovel, to take an earth bath, to turn up one's toes to the daisies, to go to grass with teeth up, to mention only a few of the more characteristic phrases. It may be motivated by an exaggerated philosophical attitude to the inevitable, a means of summary dismissal of what in conventional thinking would be unpleasant to contemplate. Whatever it is, it is here that unconventional language reveals the most marked individualism.

Thus far our study has been limited to the creative side of the unconventional. Our inquiry has been directed to the motives, impulses, and conditions that give it rise. Excluding cryptic slang, it was found that the unconventional is a universal tendency both among civilized and savage races, that it is particularly strong in the young of all races, that it is an expression of the individual self as opposed to that of the group, that it seeks its material language basis in a fresh environment, that it is spontaneous and thrives best in an atmosphere of freedom and culminates in renaissance periods of history. Having made an attempt to discover

how it comes to be, our attention will next be directed to the effect it produces.

Analysis of the Slang Impression

Most persons consider the subject only from this passive, critical side, and slang is the popular description for all usages judged exceptional. There is no general agreement as to the nature and function of slang. To specific instances of doubtful usage the reactions of different persons are often widely different and the reactions of the same persons different at different times. In a total of two hundred and ten words which were presented in the form of a narrative paragraph, sixteen observers of Clark University regarded thirty as slang. But only one of the thirty was regarded as slang by all the observers. One of them found a total of only three; another, a total of twenty-seven slang words. The individual judgment of the observers seemed unstable, so that the writer believed the results would not be the same if the experiment should be repeated. Accordingly, a month after the first test was made, new copies of the same paragraph were handed to the same observers, with the request that the slang words be underscored. They were not informed whether or not it was the same paragraph they had seen a month before. The result was that the most consistent observer who in the original test had marked twenty-seven, now marked a total of twenty-five, having added one and dropped three from the original number marked. Another, the most unstable, who originally marked seven, now took away three from the original number, and added three. The question, therefore, as to what words are slang seems not only a matter largely of individual opinion; it seems subject also to the variation due to temporary attitude or mood in the same person.

It is in the incongruous associations exhibited in slang diction that words arouse in us feeling attitudes (22) which in conventional usage are made dormant by habit. One does not realize how strong a hold established language has upon him until he meets with a novel slang substitution. It can thus be shown that all the effects of language finally reduce to feelings of relation, feelings of congruity and incongruity of association. And it is to the level of the feelings that one must needs go in the endeavor to acquire any new forms of language. In the first stage one must hear the strange sounds, feel the muscular movements required in reproducing the consonants and the various degrees of tension and pressure required in rendering the value of the vowels. When the acquisitions of the perceptive stage are made contributory to

the performance of an act, the transition to the memory stage begins. After frequent repetitions and consequent habituation, only such and so many acquisitions of every lower process are used in the higher as are needed to attain the higher aim. The mind is utilitarian, subordinating all the perceptions and memories not needed in the achievement of a higher purpose to the field of the unconscious; in other words, there is a final elimination of nearly all but the motor phase of mental imagery and that is limited to a more or less latent rôle. Although imagery is thus subordinated, it still manifests itself as feeling or attitude.

In this stage all the conscious antecedents of speech are an aim (1), a will to speak, a feeling of suspense, and a sense of effort. The words take their places which long continued use has habituated them to, and there is a feeling for association and connection of words which only comes into consciousness when its usual forward flow is checked or interrupted. Ordinarily one knows neither before speaking the words he intends to use nor after speaking the words he did employ, so closely have the language processes adapted themselves to the various demands of speech. All one does is to begin and the words come in their predetermined order. This is presumably not accurate as an analysis of the process for all persons, for it depends on the degree of mental attainment and the specific aim of mental activity. Not all of the same age have the same powers and there are different stages of development in different periods of life. There is an age of "Anschauung" or perception, and memory and imagination, and an age of the memory of logical relationships. The mind adjusts itself only to the most immediate need, neglecting what is not useful and reducing to unconscious automatism of a relatively rigid pattern all that is ancillary to the aims usually in the focus of conscious activity. Language itself becomes condensed in the process of this development.

Language belongs on its own account to the perceptive and imaginative period of life. It is this time which is favorable to the rise of the unconventional, to the testing out of the newly acquired language powers. This is the period of narrow ideation and exuberance of expression. It is the plastic period of tolerance of change and love of novelty. In the later period of abstraction when there is closer equilibration of thought and greater economy of expression, a stronger passion for unity, the unconscious attitudes have become more rigid and the feeling for word relations more definite. This is a period of conservatism and intolerance of change.

It is due to this habituation to the form language usually

takes that it is possible for one to anticipate in a general way what the course of a person's thought will be. One knows at the very beginning of a sentence another person speaks, something about the direction the thoughts will take. And as it reveals itself more and more, the field of its possibilities grows narrower, the thought becomes more definite, the possible becomes the probable and ends in the actual, and the suspense of expectation keeps rising to the close because no part is complete until the end is reached. More particularly does one anticipate the language itself. There is a certain limited vocabulary to be expected but still more limited is the number of idioms used. The idiom, which has been called the characteristic style of race in expression, becomes most thoroughly habituated. Language is, therefore, most conservative in its idiom, less conservative in its word-forms, and least conservative in its word-uses. In other words, the form the expression will take is relatively familiar; the words to be used are not so readily anticipated, the uses to which the words are put admit of the greatest variety. Violation of the idiomatic form is, therefore, the rarest kind of innovation.

The slang impression as it occurs in the passive attitude involved in cursorily reading a paragraph is due to a conflict between the anticipation and the reality or it may be due to an agreeable surprise at the difference between the anticipated and the real expression. Consciousness comes into the closest contact only with the obvious aim of its activity. The process of reading among those practiced in the art has long gone by the perceptive stage. In the reading of ordinary matter in standard English the attention is directed to the end of the unit of thought, utilizing only the minimum of perceptive material. Even the imagery, particularly in texts not purely descriptive remains relatively unnoticed. Memory takes the place of experience and mere symbols the place of memory. The word-symbol has the same effect on the psychic process *as if* it were the experience. The common factor that remains in all the stages of the progress, however, is feeling which is throughout the same in quality even though it suffer diminution in quantitative extension. There is a feeling for logic which is also a result of use. It is possible by reflection to retrace the memory associates of the feeling, but without reflection the feeling though present is not readily accounted for. When one is asked why he regards a word as slang the reply is as a rule " I cannot tell why; it is simply a feeling." But the feeling is unusual and striking in the slang impression and its cause lies nearer the surface than that which goes with customary and conventional language.

The slang comes into the divined but unconscious automatic pattern and by its novelty either stimulates the thought process or interrupts the forward movement through logical or emotional incongruity. This may be illustrated graphically by a section of a circle of which *A* is the center, BC the arc, and AB and AC the limiting radii. The direction from point A is determined by the place the matter to be heard or read has in the complex of experience. The limiting radii mark off the field of facilitation. The initial attitude becomes progressively more definite. In a unit of material to which one has become fully habituated, progress from A is free and uninterrupted, the thought is at the focus of consciousness and the language as such away from it, suspense increases, comprehension only relatively complete as far as it goes, keeps closing in, until the unit ends in BC. If a new word is included in the language material, for the moment *it* falls into the focus of consciousness, leaves a gap in the thought, and the forward movement does not fully close in on the arc BC. It would be the same, of course, with any new word in any context. But with slang there is something more. The context indicates that the new word is gratuitous and the slang impression of a disagreeable kind involves the disturbing sense of the logically unjust and the emotionally unrelated. This feeling is strong in the case of words of familiar form. In every case, however, the fundamental cause of disturbance, or it may be of agreeable feeling, is in some maladjustment or happy accident of association which experience has made into a more or less definite pattern. In the following several such effects are illustrated:

"It was all I could do to keep my eyes off his suit."

"It was all I could do to keep my eyes off'm that trousseau of his."

"I said, 'You must not care if people stare at you; they always do that to strangers.'"

"I said, 'You musn't mind folks giraffin' at you; they always do that to strangers.'"

"My friend said, 'Didn't I see you earlier in the evening accompanying about the city a gay young fellow in a striking suit of clothes?'"

"My friend said, 'Didn't I see you driftin' around town earlier in the evening with a young sport in morning-glory clothes?'"

Slang phrases often possess a greater wealth of associations than others because they appeal to recent experiences rather than to dim memories. An object is named by means of one of a constellation of associations. The relation of this one association for which the object was originally

named, to the object, may be lost through borrowing by another language or through change incident to phonetic development of the word itself. The original associations of the qualities of objects and the immediate association of word with meaning are part of what we shall call the content. The sound the word represents is its form. Of the slang words to which reactions were reported, a few seemed hardly more than a sound, or visual percept. Others although new to many aroused associations apart from the associated meaning in the context, and on inquiry it was found that the elements of the association called up by a word were different for each individual questioned in regard to it, although there was agreement in regard to its meaning in the context. It is the difference in the character of the associations the word itself calls up that accounts for the difference in reactions to it. This is a typical characteristic of slang. Its original associations lie on the surface, and the form suggests no meaning except what is afforded by the context. Now, with words that are in accepted use the denotation and its train of associations are in possession of the field, the original associations being no longer accessible to ordinary conscious reflection. Philological science is concerned with the revival of these buried associations so as to increase the total number of associations and thus give them a stronger hold on the mind. It discovers the *raison d'etre* of the word and often unearths incongruities of association as capricious, irrational, and objectionable as any in modern slang.

The character of the slang impression often depends on the attitude of the hearer to the material source of the word or phrase. He may have a superstitious aversion to the source, whatever it may be, or he may be indifferent to it, or take a nature lover's delight in it. The cause of this difference of attitudes may lie in the deeper racial levels of the consciousness.

Words which produce the slang effect arouse associations which are incongruous and incompatible with those of customary thinking. As a result they arouse disgust or produce the effect of the illogical, or they may offend the taste simply through their novelty. But it is not until slang epithets are applied to persons that they become particularly objectionable. Their use now becomes a matter of morals. They lower the sense of human dignity and cause pain. It is this that de la Grasserie calls 'argotic metamorphosis.' It consists in three stages of descent. First, in applying names of the coarser movements and parts of the body to mental activities—somamorphosis; in the use of names relating to animals and their actions—zoomorphosis; and in the use of

names relating to inanimate objects—pragmamorphosis. It is only between companions whose friendship is unshakably secure that such epithets become humorous. The following are examples chiefly of the last two: To take one's lid (hat), to leak or work the sprinkler (to cry), to peel off the clothes, to swat one on the map (face), to be skirt-shy, to be parlor-broke, a rat and book agent terrier, a full-jeweled jay from the Middle West, an upper-case I with feet. However, epithets from familiar material sources may also be complimentary: a daisy, a jewel, two jewels, a honey, a bud, the stuff, a top-notcher, the main stem, the real thing. The same object may be associated favorably as, "He is some pumpkins," or unfavorably, a pumpkinhead, a big-bug and a humbug, a bird and a jay-bird. The favorable and the unfavorable may even be combined as in the slang paradoxes, white lies and clean oaths. Associations often radiate from a common center and may be either favorable or unfavorable to the original. For instance "horse" has given us one-horse business, horse-laugh, horse-medicine, to balk, to trot out, all derogatory; but also wheel-horse, horse-sense, a whole team (from one-horse). By cumulation this idea rises to a climax in wheel-horse, a whole team,—and finally as said of Grant in the Civil War, "He is a whole team, a horse extra and a dog under the wagon." In the same way beginning with "goods" slang gives us by cumulation: "Yes, you are the goods, the whole cloth, the whole cloth and a yard wide, you are the goods duty-free and half way to the warehouse in a little red wagon."

The choice of familiar gross material as the language basis indicates an intention to be clear, whatever other qualities may be lacking. This kind of slang, therefore, emphasizes the content, the idea associated with the word. It is dynamic and exhibits sureness of aim. In cumulations and exaggerations the effect is to magnify the associated objectivity and thus to increase the effect of the association. When the associated object is found in the familiar world around, a certain degree of stability is secured for meaning, for then consciousness can orient itself with objective certainty and there is little room for individual interpretation.

But slang expressions show a varying range of possibilities of individual interpretation. Making the class just discussed as representing the greatest degree of objective clearness the starting-point, we will follow the gradations of slang in the direction of emphasis on the content with increasing condensation and vagueness of the associated idea; on the other side, illustrations will be given showing increasing tendency to emphasize form with a gradual narrowing of the content.

Slang combines the imagery of several senses in the same epithet, producing a sort of synesthetic condensation: a dark brown taste, it was so punk it was blue around the edges, to be yellow, a large pale-blue time of it. Paranomasia occurs when several trains of association meet in the same word or in the same sound of two words. In "a rest-cure job" the focus of association is in *cure* and part of another word *sinecure*. "Nothing to do but her husband" belongs to the same class. In another class, the content is more indefinite. Joy-ride, and then some, to be too too, to start something. Why women are so, to be classy, and O, you Teddy, depend much more on individual interpretation as well as individual emphasis and inflection for their meaning than the class of expressions discussed before. This class of phrases could in many instances be colored favorably or unfavorably by means of accompanying gesture or degree of emphasis or intonation or all of these. "Thing" in "*that* thing" or "that *thing*" may have various meanings. "A smooth article" is equally equivocal. In a Reginald, a Mollycoddle, an Abigail, a Willie boy, Kitty Mauds, smart Aleck, A Percy job, Johnny on the spot, slang makes a quick transition from the particular to the general.

Going still further away from the objectively clear and definite class of slang words from which we started, we come to a class in which the central factor is not thought but an emotion and in which the language plays a secondary rôle. The words consist in disguised forms of *God* and other sacred names and usually all they contain of the original is the initial hard *g* or the initial syllable *je,* also various forms suggesting hell and damnation. As words they are meaningless and subject to much change of form, being only an attendant circumstance to an explosive form of emotional expression. The use of these words, when most characteristic, is utterly unconscious.

The analysis of the slang impression has thus far been confined to the imaginal content rather than the form of words and phrases, beginning with that of relatively definite objective reference and concluding with slang of a much condensed thought content and also slang forms of an expletive character like gesture and facial expression. The course taken has been from the definite to the indefinite, from the less subjective to the more subjective in thought on one side and emotion on the other, from a narrower to a broader field of ideational and emotional activity. The more definite part of this field seems farther removed from standard language than that of the ideationally broader and less definite. The more definite an objectionable association is the less easily

does it escape making a disagreeable impression. The less definite the imagery, within limits, the wider the range of possibilities of interpretation among different persons. And it is just in this that the form's chance of general adoption lies. If a word-use at once made the same favorable impression upon all it would not be slang; if it made an unfavorable impression in equal degree upon all it would remain fixed and immobile. It is the individual who looks on it with greatest favor that introduces it to conventional use. The class who hear it used for the first time probably come to think a little more highly of the word and a little less highly of the person using it. Gradually the objectionable elements wear away and it makes its way into the language.

Turning now from a consideration of slang forms made in the direction of a broadening ideation, a growing involution of form, the course now to be taken is in the direction of a growing accentuation of the formal side of expression which corresponds to a constant narrowing of the content. Expression here exists largely for its own sake. To be exuberant and redundant in expression is also a characteristic of the unconventional tendency. Language may become an object of play as well as things. Saws and proverbs are tampered with and revised to date. Maxims are echoed in rhyme: It's a long worm that has no squirm; put that in your boat and float it; smile and the world smiles with you, snore and you sleep alone. There are many verbose expressions and ironies like: he failed to connect with it, cherished some animosity, her clothes fit her intermittently, a nine-dollar bill. Negations and affirmations are often wordy: not on your life, not on your tin-type, not on your facial expression, not on your previous existence, over the left, in the neck, guess again, search me. Intensives expressing certainty are expressed in the most far-fetched associations: fan me with a brick, knock me down with a tooth-pick, wouldn't that jar the cherries on your Aunt Carrie's bonnet, wouldn't that wrinkle your raglan, jiggle your slats. To win the game is, to put it on ice, to frame an alibi for defeat. Sounds like a complete description (for I am he), to have sporting corpuscles of the crimson variety (a slang circumlocution for a red-hot sport), how does your corporosity sagaciate?—and this nonsense shades off into the very riot of language, "a refulgent and spasmodic flare-up," "a cataclystic swirl of catadioptric flashes," reminding of Shakespere's "equinoctial of quebus," and George Ade's "wollyopolis down on the gazalium." This last is the extreme limit, where thought-content stands at zero. The examples have illustrated a growing emphasis in the form with ever

narrowing ideation down to the merest verbal nonsense, just as before illustrations were given to show how a relatively clear content may be represented in one case, while the others shade off to a relatively more condensed, more indefinite and elliptic a character; in other words, beginning on the one hand with representative forms and ending with the non-presentative and again going from the representative to the more purely presentative forms. Beyond the limits on the one side is gesture, on the other mere phonetic instrumentation. In this whole range of expression conventional language occupies a median zone.

But there is a certain kind of consistency in the ideation of continuous slang discourse which these disconnected phrases and the rather incongrous combinations fail to give. The effect of a well-constructed story in slang is not unpleasant. The reader, in such a case, assumes an attitude of expectation for the unexpected and the striking things follow each other in kaleidoscopic succession. He feels the need of alertness not to miss any "quips and cranks" while in the more conventional discourse he leisurely anticipates and passes more rapidly over the page. In time the continuous succession of the startling and the shocking, the succession of hits, even though happy, tends to benumb the imagination and weary and jade the mind. The emotional tension produced by slang is greater than that of the more customary and conventional, and the mind in time seeks relief from it, the book is laid down for the more restful atmosphere of the commonplace.

Further, if we look at slang in the larger compass of the continuous story, and into the nature of the thought structure underlying the language, we find a kind of association that often characterizes slang. It is not differentiated from conventional language by the fact that it involves comparison, contrast, and the other kinds of association comprehended under the figures of rhetoric, all of which are psychologically reducible to association by contiguity, but by the unusual relation of the component parts of the association to each other. There is, not always but often, a far-fetched comparison, a whimsical contrast, a disproportionate part put for the whole, an irrational attribution of a cause, an unwarranted inference of an effect,—any malrelation of associates. Instead of involving simply a word, it may control the whole conception of a sentence or a paragraph. Ordinarily written and spoken discourse limits itself to the field of reality; it aims and strives to see things as they are. Now, the sense of reality, in the first place, prefers the near to the remote, the present to the absent. The remote

in place or time is potential with the impressions of unreality. In the second place, the organic forms of nature manifest a uniformity of coordination and symmetry of parts with which the individual and the race have become familiar. In the third place, there are laws in the physical, moral, and social world which experience has also made more or less familiar. In these fields lies, relatively speaking, the subject-matter of conventional thought, and here are the lines of equilibrium for action, thought and conduct, and they are the ultimate basis of the ordinary associations of conventional language. The associations involved in the mythic fancy of primitive man show a progressive development towards greater equilibration; the customary associations involved in the perception of reality have not always been what they are now. In the child they are naïve and innocent and experience has not yet brought them to the conventional pattern. In the savage they seem to be in a state of arrest. The making of associations consistent with the sense of reality is an acquired competence of mind, from the level of which one may revert through disease, fatigue, intoxication, dreamery or some emotional eruption to a more primitive state of mind, and approximations to it, that dissociation occurs with a corresponding weakening of the powers of coordination. Now, it is this kind of association that slang discourse *playfully* affects that the slang tendency of mind lets happen or that through emotional tension happens to mind. In clinical cases orientation may be totally lost, or there is little if any consistency to the matter. In nonsense verses there is at least the scheme of the verse and the rhyme, and often much more, to reveal a sane sustaining principle. In the ideations of slang there is at least the simplest organizing principle of temporal continuity, and often much more, to show the difference between mere fooling and the incoherence of insanity.

In "A gray-haired agriculturist took his youngest olive-branch *by the hand and led him* to a Varsity," the mixed figure is emphatically brought out by the words in italics, as if to remind the reader, by the exaggerating touch, of the initially conceived incongruity of relations. There is harlequinade exaggeration in "The salt tears trickled down *through an archipelago* of freckles" and "He was one of these mushy-looking, soft-spoken, biscuit-haired, white-livered, young wrist-slappers; with a complexion as *ruddy as a pail of lard, skim-milk blue eyes,* and a set of parlor manners that was as good as a correspondence course in etiquette just to watch."

The slang effect may be produced without a slang form or use, as in "The name she called herself (in the back of

that head of hers, with its strange derangement of hair outside and the stranger dreams inside) was Mam'selle Lisette Monet. The name her parents called her (in the back tenement, with the week's wash outside and a large family inside) was Lizzy Mooney."

A slang fancy may be expanded into a short allegory as in the following: "Just back of her and a little above her Constance, the change girl, sat aloft in a little parapet. She also was at work like a besieged chatelaine, getting her ammunition handy. Soon she would be plied with money and merchandise from all directions, and she must load money and sales-slips into the cartridges, shoot at the distant cashier, make up the bundles, receive back a shrapnell of change, and pass it down to the grasping hands below."

A word purposely misplaced may add its element of humor to the ludicrous character of other incongruities: "It's American womanhood's duty to marry home industries—and not be tempted to become the grande-dame of a duke or baritone."

Or there may be confusion of the facts of history with orthographic monstrosities: "Asks me if I ever heard of a duck by the name of Pansy de Lean. 'Sounds kind of familiar,' says I—'don't he run a hotel or something down to Palm Beach?' You're warm says he, but you have mixed your dates. Old Pansy struck the East coast about four hundred years before our friend Flagler annexed it. And he wasn't in the hotel business. Exploring was his business. He was looking for a new kind of mineral water that he was going to call the Elixir of Life."

Here we have come into the field of caricature and the cartoon. While the unconventional forms of slang language are not necessary to grotesque ideation, which is often expressed in standard English, it is as appropriate to it as a means of fully realizing the idea, as dialect is to local color in fiction.

In the last analysis the impression of slang whether through novelty of form or far-fetched use of words seems to be reducible to one fundamental psychic cause. Association of words with things will in time give words accretions of feeling because of our experience with the words and what they represent. Every departure, therefore, from what custom has made habitual will result in a conflict of attitudes (22), which may be agreeable or disagreeable. Any uncalled-for word, flashy emphasis, novelty of form, or colloquial phrase, may produce this feeling of incongruity.

The cause of our attitudes to words lies, of course, as a rule, outside of the words themselves; that is, word values

are *extrinsic*. In other words, their character is not due to themselves, to their own forms as much as to the things for which they customarily stand. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet." But "rose" having been associated with the object is capable of arousing an image of sight and odor and inevitably a feeling, or in individual cases only a feeling. However, word-forms have an *intrinsic* value in some cases; they have a form peculiarly appropriate to their meaning.

Our feeling reactions to slang words may be due to the word as such, to the use it is put to, to the individual using it, to the group using it, to the thing tabooed to which it applies, or as we have seen, to the context in which it is found. The source of slang gives it an emotional coloring to which we react. The dialect of a locality or section of country affects us as strange, ludicrous and inadequate for serious purposes. It is not due to the word or the phrase in itself. It is due to the source from which it comes. The unconventional language of the family is reserved for the intimate life of the home and it is limited to family life as other private affairs sacred to the members of the household. The words originally limited to professions and occupations produce the effect of the strange and esoteric and in the humbler occupations they produce the same effect as the dialect of a locality. The feeling value of slang words comes out more clearly in connection with their origin in certain classes of society. The language of tramps, gypsies, and thieves, and that of the street, in so far as it differs from conventional language, causes an unfavorable reaction due to the vulgar circles in which the language is known to be used. Again, the coarser human enjoyments and common interests in which different groups of society may come to a common level, also give us a large body of words and phrases to which people react unfavorably on account of the things to which the words apply. Further, slang words and phrases used in connection with the great institutions of society and certain facts of life and death to which the conventional mind has a conservative attitude, arouses an unfavorable reaction due to the audacity which inspires them. Its use is the assertion of individuality against the character of that which conservative interests have guarded. Conservatism looks to the past, values the lessons of experience, and that which time has proved. It exercises restraint, limits its activities to the region of the average in conduct and speech. Slang is radical. It looks to the present, puts off restraint, and does not concern itself with limits in speech.

Our feeling reaction to words is strongest when the word calls up a clear image. If the thing associated is favorable, the word is regarded favorably; if not, unfavorably. Primarily, the determining factor is our attitude to the thing associated. In the former case the *Einfühlung* is positive; in the second, negative. Only words to which our *Einfühlung* is positive are acceptable in conventional discourse. In the second case, the more unmistakable the association aroused, the more definite the negative *Einfühlung.* Before the word is acceptable, for conventional use, this contrary *Einfühlung,* in other words, this aversion to the content of the word, must in some way wear off through change of form. Conventional language is full of instances of this process. An instance of which many might be given is the term "maudlin" as applied to drunk. An analysis of the word reveals a long forgotten association: Maud and *lin,* Magdalene, that is, Mary Magdalene, of the scriptural account, the connection of thought being in the idea *weeping.* The association of the idea, Mary Magdalene, with that of a weeping drunkard produces a conflict of attitudes. Slang words which present a clear content have for that reason an unfavorable prospect in regard to conventional adoption. If the content is more or less indeterminate, if it allows a certain freedom of interpretation, the reader can feel a favorable content *into* the word. A word whose original association is unknown would have only the aversion to strangeness against it. With use this would wear off and the word would soon produce the same reaction as the associated object. It would not come into conventional use, however, if the thing itself is taboo.

Slang will often be clear, even though it must be distasteful; it will be familiar, even though it must be coarse. Accepted use often courts vagueness for the sake of elegance, preferring the abstract to the concrete. A word's unfamiliar sound derived from a Greek or Latin base serves to reduce the force of a distasteful association and tones down its suggestiveness. But the diction of slang is unmistakably familiar because taken from the lower levels of life's necessities. The physiological processes which put man on a level with the animal world do not as called to mind in figurative language add to his dignity or support his feeling of superiority. Nor is the use of parts of the body as the material of figurative language (de la Grasserie's somamorphosis) due to reverence of the human form, for it puts them on the level of inert, passive things. It is realistic, naturalistic, unromantic. It produces the impression of too great nearness. Ordinary language like art presents things at a proper, comfortable distance. Slang imagery is 'under-

distanced' (3a), too intimate. It often chooses its means of expression from physiological processes, parts of the body, the senses that require contact, organs that have the possibilities of degeneration and disease; the animal world suggesting filth, disease and vermin; domestic animals with their stupidity and passivity; clothes, utensils, implements, tools,—all the familiar world around, particularly that which is oriented primarily to the contact senses.

While words, as a rule, are the passive accompaniments of a feeling, parts of trains of association, whose chief feeling nucleation is the thing for which the word stands, the word itself having been so often associated with the thing, finally comes to stand for the thing and is looked upon as an independent entity and is unconsciously accepted as the equivalent of the thing, or rather, as the thing itself including all the feeling associations that properly belong to the thing rather than the word. Accordingly, the word itself as heard or seen will arouse dispositions or attitudes of mind.

A word having once acquired a character in this way will transmit it to unfamiliar words that are similar in form. The new words will take on meanings due to the dispositions of the familiar ones unconsciously aroused in us. That is, the feeling association of the elements of the well known words induce the feeling response to the new ones.

Certain words associate themselves easily with a meaning because there is an appreciable meaning in their sound. They represent a class of words in slang which require a separate description. They are imitative, representing in their oral and auditory form at once the meaning they are intended to convey. Here the feeling value is relatively intrinsic. It is not transferred from the outside into the word, from the object to that which signifies it, but here the sign and the thing signified are one, a unity to which the consciousness readily gives assent. Among such words is *pap,* a food for children. It suggests a movement of the lips in eating without teeth. *Pooh-pooh,* expressive of disgust, suggests an expulsive movement of the breath. *Nip* suggests closing the lips over a small amount of liquor. *Piffle,* an expression of disgust, as if with something of a nauseous smell. A *snifter* suggests a short inhalation of an agreeable odor. *Bobbing* apples, a children's hallowe'en sport, suggests in the sounds of the word just what happens in the game. *Blab* with its sharp vowel sound capable of a sarcastic use suggests a movement of the lips when talking and involves contempt of the one to whom it is applied. *Gabby* is of similar import. All these words involve in themselves movements of the speech organs related intimately with the meaning they convey.

They are slang largely because they imitate by oral means of expressing contempt. In accepted usage words are never purely imitative. The feeling tone attaches easily to these forms because feeling goes readily with imitative motion. Words that imitate movements of the lips, chewing, speaking, breathing, etc., call attention to physical processes and thus fall in many cases a little below the level of conventional language.

In this class of words, *Einfühlung* (17) is a necessary process. In the class of words studied before feeling is put into the words through activities in connection with the things which they stand for; here the activity is in the word and involves it, making the word almost identical with the mental process which completes itself in movement. It is not strange that these words cling to the memory, for they are in the form which the impression they make on the mind assumes. They represent the closest possible relation between the word and the feeling.

Similar effects are produced by means of alliteration and assonance in which slang assumes a license forbidden to standard prose. Repetitions of consonant and vowel sounds and of stresses tend to function as certifying the idea. The repetition of a negative emphasizes the negation like the repeated shaking of the head. Likewise, the initial consonant of accented syllables when repeated follows the facilitated path and the thought the phrase carries gains an assent, an inevitable sanction that comes only with truth inherent in things. Slang gives to these forms its exaggerating touch, purposely overemphasizing the form of the phrases so that they haunt the memory. Alliterations are usually found in the slang books and the sporting columns: his dainty *tap to Tim* depopulated the bases, a glove-fitting straight-front flat, to get one's goat, the seven suffering sisters. The assonantal form is more popular: the land of ganders, lamp the lad in blue, ace of spades, that cooks your goose, to fly high, to shiver one's timbers, to know the ropes, etc.

It is the unconscious tendency to imitate that, all other things being equal, determines the choice of words for slang phrasing. It is this motive of imitation that in some cases, reduces the length of conventional terms to express abbreviation and summary action and in other cases lengthens conventional terms to express the opposite. It is this unconscious tendency to harmonize feeling and word that gives the impression of fitness of one for the other in the nature of things. It is thus that words become the nuclei of feeling, and psychological symbols. Logical symbolism nucleates the idea. It makes the word the sign of a meaning it is gen-

erally agreed to contain. What has been a symbol of feeling may become the symbol of an idea. The words of cryptic slang begin as symbols of ideas. To learn their significance may require initiation into the mysteries of a sect or the secrets of a gang or a course of education and training.

In imitative phrases just discussed we have a relatively perfect union of phrase and content. In another class considered in an earlier part of this study was found an emphasis of content. And in a third class the form side was found emphasized. In this last tendency of expression for its own sake we have linguistic play where language approximates mere phonic instrumentation and speech music. Its function is to open untried sources of expression and to unlock the stores of energy of a healthy organism in anticipation of the possibilities of future expression of thought, a preparation of the forms for a future content. Such play with language is not useless nor meaningless but rather to be regarded as finger exercises on the piano which are propadeutic to skillful execution of difficult musical scores. On its passive side it means pleasure in the music of language,—"*Stimmungseinfühlung.*" It is the tuneful side of language and means immediate feeling. In the cases cited as coming under the motivation of a desire to imitate, expression is characteristic rather than musically motivated. In both cases, feeling is direct. It is due to reaction to the words and phrases themselves and not first to reaction to the thing that the word or phrase stands for, and then by association to the word itself.

Summary and Conclusions

In a subject so complex it would be vain to expect general assent to formulated views. Individual experiences with their concurrent emotions form the foundations of language. They are not the same as those reflected experiences that come to us from the printed page. This will account for the antipathies (28), otherwise a mystery (36), which well-known writers bear to certain words of unquestioned usage.

In general it seems to hold true that while the unconventional has an emotional basis it does not inform all the fundamental emotions equally. It is closely related to the feeling of individual well-being and the joy of life. It is not the language of love except as this is mingled with pity. It is predominantly objective. It is not the language of fear. It is very largely the language of anger and its sublimations in scorn, sarcasm, ridicule, irony, etc.

Occasionally its creations are such that conventional lan-

guage soon adopts them, but the chief function of slang does not seem to be potential conventionality. Few slang uses are ever created, it is safe to say, with a view to secure their general adoption. The place of the unconventional is as secure as that of informal dress which is used not with the expectation that it shall some day become formal. The world of nature is the connecting link between individual minds. It is the common ground of communication. All words, however abstract they may now be, have their original basis in objects of nature. In conventional language historical progress is from the concrete to the abstract. Philological science breaks through the incrustations of form to reveal the fossil within. When to the unreflective mind this relation of language to nature is no longer evident, it reverts to uses that keep close to the concrete environment. It is the tendency of conventional usage to conceal the crassness of nature as it is the function of slang to keep revealing it.

Conventional language is the language of confederated groups. Slang rises in limited groups whose contact with the world is necessarily immediate, and intimate. These groups of society which involve different social altitudes, different interests and enjoyments, are the centers from which unconventional forms radiate. It is the language of social intercourse rather than that of written communication and books. Concentration upon common interests in the different groups gives rise to group prejudices and to a synonymy of ideas which those not members of the group cannot understand. But the usage of the group works into the deeper structure of the emotional life. There are good reasons, therefore, why the individuals of the group cling to their own forms and why they do not adopt the usage of the other groups. It is only when the groups meet in a collective capacity that the need arises for a common vocabulary. Communication with all the groups is relatively infrequent and its language is an artificial something that lies on the upper levels of consciousness.

The unconventional does not seem to be the means of economizing effort in speech. It no doubt has this effect in some cases. There is a sort of involution of language in which all forms but those absolutely necessary are spared. There is, on the other hand, a fullness and freedom of form half conscious of itself, which the unconventional tendency affects.

There is a natural slang and an artificial slang. The first is a reflection of the environment. The thinly settled country reflects nature, which is always about the same. Here language changes slowly and here rises the archaic unconven-

tional. In the city the rapid change in the interests and conditions of life also reflects itself in language. Here occur the more radical changes in language. The second, artificial slang, is an arbitrary creation. It may be by a group as in cryptic slang or by an individual writer who as the individual poet imitates the folk epic, imitates the natural forms of folk speech. This slang as found in books is sometimes abstract and learned and suggestive of student life and the lecture room. From books it is in turn carried into conversation and serves, almost invariably, to produce ludicrous effects. Natural slang is the language of the home and the privacy of a few friends in social intercourse. It is to so great a degree the language of intimate friendship that its use by a stranger is resented as an impertinence and by a friend expected as a sign of good-fellowship.

The language that goes with manual and physical activity, that accompanies movement in work or play, makes a deeper impression than the language of the schoolroom which is inculcated in its oral form by actual practice for an average of only a few minutes of the school day of six hours. And this fact is especially significant when it is remembered that the period of greatest activity, at least in play if not in work, corresponds with the period of greatest change in language. The forms of language that take the deepest hold on human nature are those which accompany children in their real emotional experiences and their manifold physical, rather than mental, activities.

The language which expresses the excitement of the market, the games of chance, the pursuit of wealth, which informs the passions of conflict, the instincts of nutrition, and reproduction, is not always the language of propriety, grammatical correctness and logical consistency. It is the language, however, with which the nervous system in moments of tension and relaxation lives and makes a part of itself. The sources of unconventional language lie deep and its power is irresistible as a force of nature. It is the individual speaking from the racial substratum, while conventional language is the language of expediency, of social deference, and reverence of the past.

Unconventional language keeps close to the objective world of things. It keeps oriented to the sense of touch, contact, pressure, preferring a language material which is ultimately verifiable by the most realistic sense. It tends to relate itself to the immediate surroundings and to change with the changing conditions of the time. It is the language of the here and the now. It is limited to the concrete, ridicules the abstract and remote. In some of its forms, it affects a lack of orientation, is far-fetched, extravagant, because it is so

sure of its realities. It has so certain a step that it plays with the objects of its thought. It knows where it wants to go and it has the linguistic means to arrive, but it may go like one uncertain of his course in harlequin fashion. Its affectations, euphemisms, and contradictions seem to rise from a secure perception of reality. It is the language of reality such as common sense conceives it.

The rise of the unconventional is due to the play impulse; to the desire for secrecy, for economy of effort, for accuracy, and for reality.

Variations from standards are ultimately referable to individuals, opportunity for habituation to them is afforded by the group.

Words are objectionable when their composition is irregular, when they are purely imitative and require sounds exceptional in loudness and quality and a mouthing articulation, when associated with an objectionable individual or group source, when they represent objectionable things, when they are sufficiently like those of the preceding class to arouse dispositions due to them, when they occur in a context which produces a conflict of dispositions, or attitudes.

The range of unconventional language is from words of the most objective definiteness to expletive accompaniments of gesture and emotion on the one hand, and to a waning content with exaggeration of form to mere phonic instrumentation on the other.

It is largely the language of expression rather than that of communication. The conventional is for distance; it holds from group to group, from generation to generation, from age to age. It tends toward permanence of form. The unconventional is for depth of appeal; it is individual and intimate. It is also unstable and temporary. But however fitful, irregular, and protean it may be, the impulses that inform it are permanent. As there always has been so there always will be an unconventional language.

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